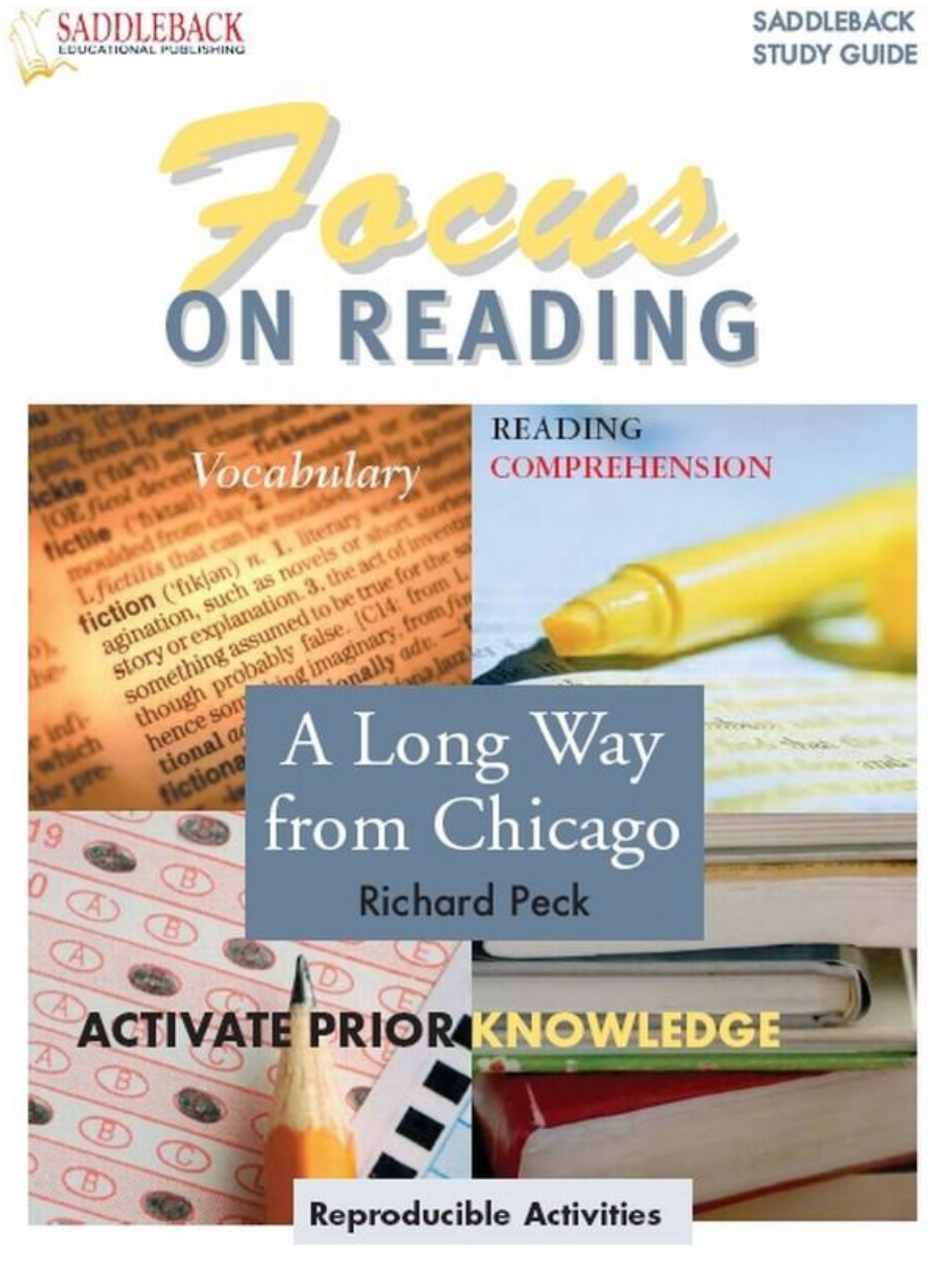


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# Focus ON READING



*Vocabulary*

READING  
COMPREHENSION

## A Long Way from Chicago

Richard Peck

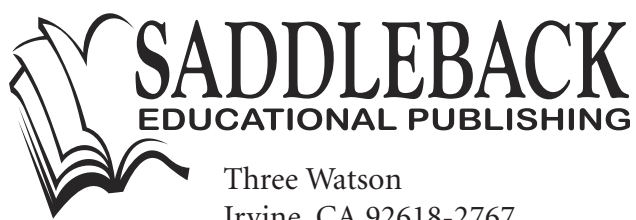
**ACTIVATE PRIOR KNOWLEDGE**

**Reproducible Activities**

# *Focus* **ON READING**

*A Long Way  
from Chicago*

LISA FRENCH



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# Introduction/Classroom Management

## WELCOME TO *FOCUS ON READING*

*Focus on Reading* literature study guides are designed to help all students comprehend and analyze their reading. Many teachers have grappled with the question of how to make quality literature accessible to all students. Students who are already avid readers of quality literature are motivated to read and are familiar with prereading and reading strategies. However, struggling readers frequently lack basic reading skills and are not equipped with the prior knowledge and reading strategies to thoroughly engage in the classroom literature experience.

*Focus on Reading* is designed to make teachers' and students' lives easier! How? By providing materials that allow all students to take part in reading quality literature. Each *Focus on Reading* study guide contains activities that focus on vocabulary and comprehension skills that students need to get the most from their reading. In addition, each section within the guide contains a before-reading **Focus Your Reading** page containing tools to ensure success: **Vocabulary Words to Know**, **Things to Know**, and **Questions to Think About**. These study aids will help students who may not have the prior knowledge they need to truly comprehend the reading.

## USING *FOCUS ON READING*

*Focus on Reading* is designed to make it easy for you to meet the individual needs of students who require additional reading skills support. Each *Focus on Reading* study guide contains teacher and student support materials, reproducible student activity sheets, an end-of-book test, and an answer key.

- **Focus on the Book**, a convenient reference section for the teacher, provides a brief overview of the entire book including a synopsis, information about the setting, author data, and historical background.
- **Focus Your Knowledge**, a reference page for students, is a whole-book, prereading activity designed to activate prior knowledge and immerse students in the topic.

The study guide divides the novel into 6 manageable sections to make it easy to plan classroom time. Five activities are devoted to each section of the novel.

## Before Reading

- **Focus Your Reading** consists of 3 prereading sections:

**Vocabulary Words to Know** lists and defines 10 vocabulary words students will encounter in their reading. Students will not have to interrupt their reading to look up, ask for, or spend a lot of time figuring out the meaning of unfamiliar words. These words are later studied in-depth within the lesson.

**Things to Know** identifies terms or concepts that are integral to the reading but that may not be familiar to today's students. This section is intended to "level the playing field" for those students who may not have much prior knowledge about the time period, culture, or theme of the book. It also gets students involved with the book, increasing interest before they begin reading.

**Questions to Think About** helps students focus on the main ideas and important details they should be looking for as they read. This activity helps give students a *purpose* for reading. The goal of these guiding questions is to build knowledge, confidence, and comfort with the topics in the reading.

## During Reading

- **Build Your Vocabulary** presents the 10 unit focus words in the exact context of the book. Students are then asked to write their own definitions and sentences for the words.
- **Check Your Understanding: Multiple Choice** offers 10 multiple-choice, literal comprehension questions for each section.
- **Check Your Understanding: Short Answer** contains 10 short-answer questions based on the reading.

## After Reading

- **Deepen Your Understanding** is a writing activity that extends appreciation and analysis of the book. This activity focuses on critical-thinking skills and literary analysis.
- **End-of-Book Test** contains 20 multiple-choice items covering the book. These items ask questions that require students to synthesize the information in the book and make inferences in their answers.



## CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

*Focus on Reading* is very flexible. It can be used by the whole class, by small groups, or by individuals. Each study guide divides the novel into 6 manageable units of study.

This literature comprehension program is simple to use. Just photocopy the lessons and distribute them at the appropriate time as students read the novel.

You may want to reproduce and discuss the **Focus Your Knowledge** page before distributing the paperbacks. This page develops and activates prior knowledge to ensure that students have a grounding in the book before beginning reading. After reading this whole-book prereading page, students are ready to dive into the book.

The **Focus Your Reading** prereading activities are the keystone of this program. They prepare students for what they are going to read, providing focus for the complex task of reading. These pages should be distributed before students actually begin reading the corresponding section of the novel. There are no questions to be answered on these pages; these are for reference and support during reading. Students may choose to take notes on these pages as they read. This will also give students a study tool for review before the **End-of-Book Test**.

The **Focus Your Reading** pages also provide an excellent bridge to home. Parents, mentors, tutors, or

other involved adults can review vocabulary words with students, offer their own insights about the historical and cultural background outlined, and become familiar with the ideas students will be reading about. This can help families talk to students in a meaningful way about their reading, and it gives the adults something concrete to ask about to be sure that students are reading and understanding.

The **Build Your Vocabulary** and **Check Your Understanding: Multiple Choice** and **Short Answer** activities should be distributed when students begin reading the corresponding section of the novel. These literature guide pages are intended to help students comprehend and retain what they read; they should be available for students to refer to at any time during the reading.

**Deepen Your Understanding** is an optional extension activity that goes beyond literal questions about the book, asking students for their own ideas and opinions—and the reasons behind them. These postreading activities generally focus on literary analysis.

As reflected in its title, the **End-of-Book Test** is a postreading comprehension test to be completed after the entire novel has been read.

For your convenience, a clear **Answer Key** simplifies the scoring process.

## Focus on the Book

### Synopsis

Over the course of seven years, Joey Dowdel and his sister, Mary Alice, spend one week each August in an Illinois country town with their paternal grandmother. Formidable Grandma Dowdel is an unflappable, independent woman. She first alarms, then fascinates, Joey and Mary Alice as she chooses highly unorthodox means to achieve her unfailingly just ends. Through Joey's eyes, readers are drawn into the squabbles, rivalries, and social pretensions of small-town American life in the early twentieth century. Each chapter represents one summer and imparts one more humorous vignette in the children's series of visits. Grandma's character emerges more clearly as the years pass, while Joey and Mary Alice grow to admire and love her for her strength, loyalty, compassion, and deadpan humor.

In "Shotgun Cheatham's Last Night Above Ground (1929)," nine-year-old Joey and seven-year-old Mary Alice first arrive at Grandma's. Fresh from the city, the children are initially bored. When curiosity about a recently dead loner named Shotgun Cheatham lures a reporter to town, however, Grandma leaps into action, and boredom is banished. She misinforms the reporter about Shotgun's past, turns the dead man into a Civil War hero, and hosts his wake and funeral at her own house. When Grandma's cat sneaks into Shotgun's coffin and makes the gauzy drapery around the body move, it frightens everyone—except Grandma—out of their wits.

In "The Mouse in the Milk (1930)," Grandma and her "enemy," Effie Wilcox, are the targets of pranks by the Cowgill brothers, sons of the local dairy farmer. Grandma seeks reparation for her blown-up mailbox by pretending that she will be out of town for a day. She then sets a trap into which the brothers promptly fall. Ultimately, by doctoring a bottle of Mr. Cowgill's fresh milk with a dead mouse, Grandma extorts her way to "justice"—a new mailbox for herself and punishment for the four boys.

In "A One-Woman Crime Wave (1931)," as Depression-era drifters move through town in search of food and work, Grandma drags the children along on an illegal catfishing trip. Catching the sheriff and his cronies at a drunken songfest in the woods, Grandma blackmails the sheriff into letting her serve the drifters a feast that night by the railroad tracks. Along the way,

the children learn that Grandma has been faithfully feeding and caring for an aged, isolated woman who was her first employer.

In "The Day of Judgment (1932)," Grandma is enticed into entering the baking contest at the county fair. Fearing that a rival will win the blue ribbon for his superior-looking gooseberry pie, Grandma switches the name tags in front of their baked goods. Unfortunately, her own pie—now assigned to her rival—wins the contest. Undaunted, Grandma practices a little sleight of hand and uses the blue ribbon from her hat to win a free airplane ride, which she eventually transfers to an eager Joey.

In "The Phantom Brakeman (1933)," Mary Alice harbors a downtrodden girl, Vandalia Eubanks, in Grandma's house as Vandalia tries to escape the clutches of her grasping, critical mother. Eventually, Grandma capitalizes on a local ghost story to help Vandalia and her suitor, Junior Stubbs, elope on the Wabash Cannonball.

In "Things with Wings (1934)," Effie Wilcox is forced to leave town when the bank forecloses on her house. Resourceful Grandma makes a few minor adjustments to an old stovepipe hat and a quilt from her attic and takes them to the church rummage sale. Soon the town believes that these items once belonged to Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln, and the value of these items soars. Grandma leverages this rumor to get Effie's house back for her, "free and clear."

In "Centennial Summer (1935)," the final full chapter in the book, Joey and Mary Alice make their last visit to Grandma together. As the town celebrates its one-hundredth birthday, Grandma is once again goaded into competition against the banker's family. As usual, Grandma manages to make things come out "right," besting her rivals first in a talent show, then in a parade and contest for the town's "oldest settler."

"The Troop Train (1942)" is a brief afterword in which Joe Dowdel describes one last glimpse of Grandma as he rides an army train through the night en route to basic training camp. As the train passes through Grandma's town, Joey sees her house, lit up in greeting like a beacon of faith and hope. In the doorway stands Grandma, waving out into the night, solid and comforting as ever.

*(continued)*



# Contents

## About the Author

Richard Peck was born in 1934 in Decatur, a small town in central Illinois. As a boy, Peck dreamed of big-city life and foreign travel. After attending college in England and Indiana, he received his bachelor's degree in 1956, followed by a master's degree in 1959. Peck then became a high-school English teacher, which eventually served as a catalyst for his writing:

*From that first day in a classroom of my own, I heard the voices of the young, and found that I was no longer one of them. I'd never have become a writer without all this variety of voices, vocabulary, viewpoint. As an English teacher I learned things about the private life of the very young that their parents need never know.*

Since 1971, Peck has written over twenty books, including four young-adult novels featuring Blossom Culp. He has won numerous prestigious literary awards, including a Newbery Honor in 1999 for *A Long Way from Chicago* and the 2001 Newbery Award for its sequel, *A Year Down Yonder*. Peck now lives in New York City.

## Historical Background

*A Long Way from Chicago* begins in August 1929. The Jazz Age—a boom time in the economic, technological, and cultural sectors of American life—was coming to an end. In the country, farmers were being forced to sell

their crops at minimal prices and could not pay their bills. In the cities, factory workers were earning very low wages while factory owners made record-breaking profits. Prohibition, voted in with the 18th Amendment in 1919, had essentially backfired, spawning an underworld bootlegging industry and spurring criminal organizations to new heights of power. In addition, the health of the stock market was questionable. Since millions of Americans in the 1920s had invested heavily in stocks with borrowed money, they risked being unable to pay back these debts should stock prices fall.

On October 24, 1929, the country faced the gravest economic crisis in its history when the stock market crashed. Shareholders lost over \$3 billion almost overnight. On October 29, stock prices tumbled again even more steeply. Stocks continued to decline for four years. Millions of Americans lost their jobs and their homes during this era, known as the Great Depression. President Herbert Hoover, whose attempts to remedy the situation were rather ineffectual, was voted out of office in 1932. His successor, Franklin D. Roosevelt, took office in March 1933 and brought Americans a New Deal. During Roosevelt's first 100 days in office, Congress passed fifteen new laws that authorized major bank loans, direct assistance to individuals and families, job programs, and farm subsidies. Although the Great Depression actually continued until the outbreak of World War II, conditions for many Americans improved during Roosevelt's terms in office.

## *Focus Your Knowledge*

- In an atlas or on a wall map of the United States, find the state of Illinois. Where is Illinois in relation to the rest of the country? In what region of the country is Illinois located? What do you already know about this part of the country and its contributions to American life in the early twentieth century?
- Now find Chicago. How does Chicago compare with other towns and cities in Illinois in terms of size and location? How does it compare with other cities in the rest of the country? How do you think life in Chicago may have compared with life in less urban areas of Illinois in the early twentieth century?
- Review what you know about American life in the 1920s and 1930s. How much of the country was urban? How much was rural? How did most people in rural areas make their living? What did people in large towns and cities do for work?
- Think about communication and transportation systems in the early twentieth century. How did people stay in touch with each other then? How long did it take for news to spread? How important were the country's railroads in transporting both people and goods? How common were automobiles in the 1920s? the 1930s? How did most people get from place to place?
- The early chapters in this novel are set during a time when gangsters held a great deal of power in Chicago (as well as other American cities). What do you know about the Chicago "underworld" of Al Capone and other notorious criminals of the 1920s? How have these characters been portrayed in films and other media?
- Much of this novel is set during the Great Depression. What do you know about this time of economic and social crisis in the United States? How did people survive massive unemployment and poverty during the Depression years?

**I. PROLOGUE—SHOTGUN CHEATHAM'S  
LAST NIGHT ABOVE GROUND (1929)****BEFORE READING***Focus Your Reading**Vocabulary Words to Know*

Study the following words and definitions. You will meet these words in your reading. Be sure to jot down in your word journal any other unknown words from the reading.

**privy**—a small building that serves as a crude toilet; outhouse  
**snaggletoothed**—having crooked or broken teeth  
**obituary**—a printed notice of someone's death  
**hayseeds**—awkward and naïve country dwellers  
**reprobate**—a person with an immoral character

**penitentiary**—a prison  
**philanthropist**—a person who gives money to help others  
**circumstances**—conditions, situations  
**riveted**—paid complete attention to; rooted to the spot  
**disfigured**—having one's looks marred by an injury or a wound

*Things to Know*

Here is some background information about this section of the book.

**Al Capone** and **Bugs Moran** were archrivals in Chicago's gangster underworld. Both men ran illegal bootlegging and racketeering networks in the 1920s. On February 14, 1929, in the **St. Valentine's Day Massacre**, men from the Capone gang trapped seven men from the Moran gang in a garage. Believing that one of the seven was Bugs Moran, the Capone men killed the others with machine-gun fire. As it turned out, Moran was not there.

A **stiff** is an underworld term for a dead body. **Concrete overshoes** refer to the cement that gangsters sometimes put on their victims so that their dead bodies would sink to the bottom of a body of water.

**Prohibition** was the outlawing of the sale of alcoholic beverages in the United States. It was introduced by the 18th Amendment, which took effect in January 1920, and was repealed by the 20th Amendment, which took effect in January 1933.

The **Hupmobile** was an automobile that was made by the Hupp Motor Company in Detroit, Michigan, between 1909 and 1940. It was designed to be a reliable, sturdy car that could be afforded by many working people.

**I. PROLOGUE—SHOTGUN CHEATHAM'S  
LAST NIGHT ABOVE GROUND (1929)****BEFORE READING***Focus Your Reading**Questions to Think About*

The following questions will help you understand the meaning of what you read. You do not have to write out the answers to these questions. Instead, look at them before you begin reading, and think about them while you are reading.

1. In how many different ways can you interpret the title of this novel, *A Long Way from Chicago*?
2. Why do you think the author chose to write this book using the first-person point of view?  
(In the first-person point of view, the narrator of the story is an actor in the story. The reader only gets information that the narrator knows or experiences himself or herself.)
3. What motivates Grandma to trick people at times? Is this a good thing?
4. Do Joey's and Mary Alice's attitudes toward their grandmother change over time? If yes, in what ways?
5. When Joey talks about Grandma's town as a place to "ponder all the different kinds of truth," what do his words mean?

**I. PROLOGUE—SHOTGUN CHEATHAM'S  
LAST NIGHT ABOVE GROUND (1929)****DURING READING***Build Your Vocabulary*

Read the sentences below. On the line, write your definition of the word in bold type. Then, on another sheet of paper, use that word in a new sentence of your own.

1. "For one thing, at Grandma's you had to go outside to the **privy**."  
privy: \_\_\_\_\_
2. "A big old **snaggletoothed** tomcat lived in the cobhouse, and as quick as you'd come out of the privy, he'd jump at you."  
snaggletoothed: \_\_\_\_\_
3. "The county seat newspaper didn't want to run an **obituary** on anyone called Shotgun, but nobody knew any other name for him."  
obituary: \_\_\_\_\_
4. "He wants to get the horselaugh on us because he thinks we're nothing but a bunch of **hayseeds** and no-'count country people."  
hayseeds: \_\_\_\_\_
5. "He was just an old **reprobate** who lived poor and died broke," Grandma said."  
reprobate: \_\_\_\_\_
6. "They were telling the reporter Shotgun killed a man and went to the **penitentiary**."  
penitentiary: \_\_\_\_\_
7. "Shotgun had gone from kill-crazy gunslinger to war-hero marksman. **Philanthropist**, even."  
philanthropist: \_\_\_\_\_
8. "In normal **circumstances** the family recalls stories about the departed to pass the long night hours."  
circumstances: \_\_\_\_\_
9. "The reporter was **riveted**, and Mrs. Wilcox was sinking fast."  
riveted: \_\_\_\_\_
10. "But apart from scattered shot, she hadn't **disfigured** Shotgun Cheatham any more than he already was."  
disfigured: \_\_\_\_\_



**I. PROLOGUE—SHOTGUN CHEATHAM'S  
LAST NIGHT ABOVE GROUND (1929)****DURING READING**

## *Check Your Understanding*

### *Multiple Choice*

Circle the letter of the best answer to each question.

1. How long each summer do Joey and Mary Alice spend with Grandma?
  - a. the month of August
  - b. two weeks
  - c. one week
2. Where is Grandma's house located?
  - a. near the center of town
  - b. the last house in town
  - c. the first house in town
3. How old are Joey and Mary Alice when they pay their first visit to Grandma?
  - a. eight and six
  - b. nine and seven
  - c. ten and eight
4. Why does Mary Alice say that she can't stand it at Grandma's?
  - a. because she hates using the privy
  - b. because she misses her parents
  - c. because it is hotter than Chicago
5. Why does the big-city reporter come to town asking about Shotgun Cheatham?
  - a. He is related to Shotgun.
  - b. August is a slow month for news, and Shotgun's story seems promising.
  - c. He is writing a book on the James brothers, and Shotgun was once part of the James brothers' gang.
6. What does Grandma tell Joey and Mary Alice about how Shotgun got his name?
  - a. He accidentally shot a cow when he was ten.
  - b. Jesse James gave him the name.
  - c. General Grant gave him the name.
7. What does Grandma tell the reporter about Effie Wilcox?
  - a. Effie was once married to Shotgun.
  - b. Effie has recently been in the hospital for the insane.
  - c. Effie is the smartest woman in town.
8. Why does Grandma want a fancy funeral for Shotgun Cheatham?
  - a. She feels sorry for his family.
  - b. She and Effie were his good friends.
  - c. She wants to trick the reporter into thinking that Shotgun was a hero.
9. Why does Grandma fire her gun in the middle of the night?
  - a. She fears Shotgun has come back to life.
  - b. She wants to kill the tomcat clawing at Shotgun's coffin.
  - c. She wants Effie and the reporter to think that Shotgun is trying to get out of his coffin.
10. What does Mary Alice say about her experience at Shotgun Cheatham's funeral?
  - a. It made her want to be like Grandma.
  - b. It gave her nightmares for years.
  - c. It made her want to be a reporter.

**I. PROLOGUE—SHOTGUN CHEATHAM'S  
LAST NIGHT ABOVE GROUND (1929)****DURING READING**

## *Check Your Understanding*

### *Short Answer*

Write a short answer for each question.

1. Why does Joey say that he and his sister seemed to see a “different woman every summer” when they visited Grandma?
2. Why is Grandma Dowdel not considered a popular woman?
3. Why is Joey surprised that he and his sister had to “leave Chicago to see a dead body”?
4. According to Joey, what has made it hard for his family to stay in close touch with Grandma?
5. How do Joey and Mary Alice get to Grandma’s?
6. When Joey and Mary Alice stroll “uptown” during their first visit, how does Joey describe it?
7. Why doesn’t the county seat newspaper want to run an obituary on Shotgun Cheatham?
8. What does Grandma think the newspaper reporter is after when he comes to town?
9. According to Grandma, where in town did Shotgun live?
10. When Grandma fires her gun, how does the reporter leave the house?

**I. PROLOGUE—SHOTGUN CHEATHAM'S  
LAST NIGHT ABOVE GROUND (1929)****AFTER READING**

## *Deepen Your Understanding*

*“‘And I wasn’t no Annie Oakley myself, except with squirrels.’ Grandma was still at the door, fanning her apron. Then in the same voice she said, ‘Looks like we got company. Take them tomatoes off the fire.’ ”*

In this novel, all of the characters speak informal English. They do not always use correct grammar, and they sprinkle their speech with idioms—special phrases that cannot be taken literally. When Joey says that he and Mary Alice had to go all the way from Chicago before they could “set eyes on a corpse,” he is using an idiom. Obviously, the children are not actually placing their eyes on a dead body; they are just looking at one.

The novel also contains many *similes* and *metaphors*. These are special ways to compare two very different kinds of things. In a simile, the word *like* or *as* signals the comparison. In a metaphor, these words are omitted. When Joey says that Grandma is “tough as an old boot,” he is using a simile. Later, when he says that Grandma “wasn’t no oil painting herself,” he is using a metaphor.

With all of these techniques, the author has tried to create the everyday voices of the rural Midwest in the 1930s. This “real-life” regional language is called *the vernacular*. It helps make Joey’s story about life in Grandma’s town fresher and more believable.

Write a paragraph in which you use the vernacular to describe a colorful character you have either known or imagined. In your paragraph, try to use several idioms, at least one simile, and at least one metaphor.

## II. THE MOUSE IN THE MILK (1930)

## BEFORE READING

*Focus Your Reading**Vocabulary Words to Know*

Study the following words and definitions. You will meet these words in your reading. Be sure to jot down in your word journal any other unknown words from the reading.

**consolation**—comfort

**galoot**—an awkward or a foolish-looking person

**glowered**—frowned; stared sulkily

**settee**—a sofa with a back and arms

**pilfering**—stealing regularly but in small amounts

**culprits**—those guilty of a crime

**galvanized**—coated with zinc for extra strength

**ransack**—to search roughly and thoroughly in order to rob

**liable**—likely

**lamented**—wailed

*Things to Know*

Here is some background information about this section of the book.

In May 1927, **Colonel Charles Lindbergh** made the first nonstop airplane flight across the Atlantic Ocean. He took off from Roosevelt Field on Long Island, in New York, and landed 33 hours later at Le Bourget airport near Paris. Lindbergh became an instant international hero. His plane was named *The Spirit of St. Louis* because a group of supporters in St. Louis, Missouri, had paid for it to be built.

**Calvin Coolidge** was the thirtieth president of the United States. He was president from 1923 to 1929, during most of the Roaring Twenties.

**Herbert Hoover** was the thirty-first president of the United States. Hoover took office just as the country's economy was collapsing and heading into the Great Depression.

**Tom Mix** was a silent film star who appeared in over three hundred Westerns. He was the most famous movie cowboy of the 1920s, often riding Tony the Wonder Horse. When talking pictures were invented, Mix faded from the screen, but he continued to have a successful radio show for twenty years.

## II. THE MOUSE IN THE MILK (1930)

## BEFORE READING

*Focus Your Reading**Questions to Think About*

The following questions will help you understand the meaning of what you read. You do not have to write out the answers to these questions. Instead, look at them before you begin reading, and think about them while you are reading.

1. When Grandma says that she doesn't care about the town, how truthful is she being?
2. How does Joey seem to be adjusting to his summer visits with Grandma as time passes?  
What about Mary Alice?
3. Why is Mrs. Wilcox known as Grandma's "enemy"? Is this accurate?
4. Does Grandma ever make any effort to appear "ladylike," to use Mr. Cowgill's word?  
Why or why not?
5. What steps does Grandma take to see that "justice" is served to the Cowgill boys? What does this show about Grandma's character?

## II. THE MOUSE IN THE MILK (1930)

## DURING READING

*Build Your Vocabulary*

Read the sentences below. On the line, write your definition of the word in bold type. Then, on another sheet of paper, use that word in a new sentence of your own.

1. “My only **consolation** is that there’s a prayer meeting at church tomorrow night.”  
consolation: \_\_\_\_\_
2. “He was a big, tall **galoot** of a kid with narrow eyes.”  
galoot: \_\_\_\_\_
3. “Mary Alice **glowered** but said nothing.”  
glowered: \_\_\_\_\_
4. “She flopped on the **settee** and fidgeted.”  
settee: \_\_\_\_\_
5. “‘What we have here,’ Grandma said, ‘is breaking-and-entering. Burglary and **pilfering**.’”  
pilfering: \_\_\_\_\_
6. “‘You knew at the time who the **culprits** was who kicked your privy to kingdom come.’”  
culprits: \_\_\_\_\_
7. “‘And I’ll want me a new mailbox. A good **galvanized** iron one, even if it runs you three dollars.’”  
galvanized: \_\_\_\_\_
8. “‘A bunch of worthless boys who’d **ransack** the town every night is apt to drop a mouse in the milk just before delivering to my door.’”  
ransack: \_\_\_\_\_
9. “‘Thugs like yours who prey on two old helpless widow women such as Effie and myself is **liable** to get up to anything.’”  
liable: \_\_\_\_\_
10. “They squealed like stuck hogs while Mrs. Cowgill **lamented** from the milk wagon.”  
lamented: \_\_\_\_\_



## II. THE MOUSE IN THE MILK (1930)

## DURING READING

*Check Your Understanding**Multiple Choice*

Circle the letter of the best answer to each question.

1. What does Mary Alice say is the “loneliest job in the world”?
  - a. jumping rope by yourself
  - b. being the sheriff in Grandma’s town
  - c. being Grandma all alone in the country
2. Why hasn’t Joey done his giant jigsaw puzzle back in Chicago?
  - a. He has been too busy with school.
  - b. His family’s apartment is small.
  - c. His mother hates puzzles.
3. What happens just as Joey is reaching for a puzzle piece one evening?
  - a. Mary Alice sees Mrs. Wilcox hurrying up the path.
  - b. Grandma fires her gun at a prowler.
  - c. There is a flash of light outside.
4. What has happened to Grandma’s mailbox?
  - a. Someone has been throwing rocks at it.
  - b. The mailman’s horse has galloped into it.
  - c. Someone blew it up with fireworks.
5. What does Mrs. Wilcox tell Grandma while Joey and Alice are eating breakfast?
  - a. The Cowgills broke into her house.
  - b. She wishes Grandma would go to the prayer meeting with her.
  - c. Her privy has been destroyed.
6. What do Joey and Mary Alice think when they hear Grandma tell Ernie Cowgill that she is going to visit her cousin Leota?
  - a. They think that Grandma is lying.
  - b. They are excited about leaving Grandma’s because they’re bored.
  - c. They are upset; they don’t like Leota.
7. What does Grandma do with the mouse that Mary Alice finds in the mousetrap?
  - a. She dumps it into a bottle and pours milk over it.
  - b. She throws it outside for the tomcat.
  - c. She calls the Cowgills to take it away.
8. What does Grandma do when she hears the Cowgills in her kitchen late at night?
  - a. She fires her gun into the kitchen.
  - b. She lights a cherry bomb and rolls it into the kitchen.
  - c. She tells Joey to fetch the sheriff.
9. What does Mrs. Wilcox say when she sees Joey at the Holy Rollers church?
  - a. She tells him to get out of church because he isn’t dressed properly.
  - b. She says it’s a miracle to see a Dowdel in church.
  - c. She asks him why his sister and grandmother aren’t there, too.
10. How does Grandma get Mr. Cowgill to punish his four sons?
  - a. She pretends that his boys have put a mouse in her milk and threatens to tell other people about it.
  - b. She tells him that if he doesn’t whip his sons himself, she will get them sent to jail.
  - c. She threatens to sue the Cowgills.

## II. THE MOUSE IN THE MILK (1930)

## DURING READING

*Check Your Understanding**Short Answer*

Write a short answer for each question.

1. What recent event is shown on Joey's picture puzzle?
2. Where is Grandma's bedroom? Why?
3. What does Joey say about Grandma's breakfasts?
4. How does Grandma respond when Mrs. Wilcox asks her to send the children out of the kitchen before she tells Grandma what is wrong?
5. Why does Grandma seem to find it so interesting that Mrs. Wilcox's privy has been scattered around her yard?
6. How does Ernie Cowgill respond when Grandma tells him that her milk had a mouse in it?
7. What does Grandma tell Ernie about her two grandchildren?
8. Why does Grandma think that Ernie will believe what she says about Joey?
9. What does Mary Alice say about her experience of finding the mouse in the trap?
10. How does Grandma trick the Cowgill boys into thinking she is away?

## II. THE MOUSE IN THE MILK (1930)

## AFTER READING

*Deepen Your Understanding*

*A Long Way from Chicago* is written in the first person, or the “I” point of view. This makes the novel appear to be an autobiography, or the story of the narrator’s own life. In this case, the narrator is Joey, who describes his summertime visits to Grandma Dowdel many years earlier. The stories are told with great humor and affection, as Joey recalls the adventures he and Mary Alice had with Grandma in her very small Illinois town.

Write a brief autobiographical essay that tells about an amusing event from your childhood. Be sure to include details that will help the scene come alive for your readers.

## III. A ONE-WOMAN CRIME WAVE (1931)

## BEFORE READING

*Focus Your Reading**Vocabulary Words to Know*

Study the following words and definitions. You will meet these words in your reading. Be sure to jot down in your word journal any other unknown words from the reading.

**wafting**—moving lightly through the air

**mirage**—an optical illusion, often seen from a distance

**shimmied**—vibrated; shook from the shoulders down

**pivoted**—turned by transferring one's weight over a central point

**stagnant**—motionless and unclean

**writhed**—twisted in coils

**warbled**—sang in a quavering voice

**grisly**—horrible; disgusting

**jurisdiction**—a region of legal power or control

**larceny**—theft

*Things to Know*

Here is some background information about this section of the book.

**The Great Depression** began in October 1929, when the stock market crashed in the United States. Stockholders lost billions of dollars overnight, millions of Americans lost their jobs, and many people went hungry and homeless for years. The Great Depression did not officially end until the country entered World War II.

**Chiggers** are a type of six-legged mite that live by sucking the blood of vertebrates, including humans. Their bite is very irritating to the skin. **Cottonmouths**, or water moccasins, are a poisonous type of pit viper that can swim.

**Decoration Day** was the old name for the national holiday that Americans now know as Memorial Day.

The **Chicago Loop** is the most important business district in downtown Chicago. It got its name because of the “loop” that the trolley-car tracks made around this part of the city before Chicago’s elevated train was built.

**Gunnysack** is a coarsely woven fabric, such as hemp or jute, that is often used for grain bags.

**Bootleggers** were people who dealt in illegal liquor-making and liquor-selling businesses during Prohibition.

## III. A ONE-WOMAN CRIME WAVE (1931)

## BEFORE READING

*Focus Your Reading**Questions to Think About*

The following questions will help you understand the meaning of what you read. You do not have to write out the answers to these questions. Instead, look at them before you begin reading, and think about them while you are reading.

1. How is the Great Depression affecting life in Grandma's town? How is it affecting the whole region?
2. How does Mary Alice's behavior show that she is beginning to grow up a bit? What about Joey?
3. What do Joey and Mary Alice learn about Grandma's past that helps them to understand her better?
4. What is it about Grandma that prevents people from asking her too many questions?
5. Why does Grandma sometimes break the rules? Is she ever justified in doing this?

## III. A ONE-WOMAN CRIME WAVE (1931)

## DURING READING

*Build Your Vocabulary*

Read the sentences below. On the line, write your definition of the word in bold type. Then, on another sheet of paper, use that word in a new sentence of your own.

1. "Now that they mentioned it, I could smell something pretty powerful **wafting** into the kitchen."  
wafting: \_\_\_\_\_
2. "... pretty soon the trees along the creek began to show on the horizon. But they were like a **mirage** that keeps its distance."  
mirage: \_\_\_\_\_
3. "... I was stabbed three times by the barbs. But like a miracle, Grandma **shimmied** under."  
shimmied: \_\_\_\_\_
4. "Being a boy, I climbed the wires and **pivoted** over on a fence post, on the heel of my wounded hand."  
pivoted: \_\_\_\_\_
5. "Dragonflies skated over the scum on the **stagnant** backwater."  
stagnant: \_\_\_\_\_
6. "Then I got the scare of my life. A low limb **writhed** and looped. ... Then an enormous snake dropped into the boat."  
writhed: \_\_\_\_\_
7. "Now this singing **warbled** up from around a bend in the creek, like a bad barbershop quartet. ..."  
warbled: \_\_\_\_\_
8. "It was a **grisly** sight, and Mary Alice's eyes bugged. I wasn't sure she ought to be seeing this."  
grisly: \_\_\_\_\_
9. "'Yes, and I'm the sheriff of the county!' O. B. Dickerson bellowed. 'You're in my **jurisdiction**!'"  
jurisdiction: \_\_\_\_\_
10. "'That's what we call **larceny**, Mrs. Dowdel. You could go up for that.'"  
larceny: \_\_\_\_\_

## III. A ONE-WOMAN CRIME WAVE (1931)

## DURING READING

*Check Your Understanding**Multiple Choice*

Circle the letter of the best answer to each question.

1. Why are the freight trains loaded down with men in the summer of 1931?
  - a. They are all going to the inauguration of President Hoover.
  - b. They are working to build a new railroad across Illinois.
  - c. They are traveling around the country trying to find food and work.
2. Why is there a strange smell in the cobhouse on the first afternoon the children arrive back at Grandma's?
  - a. There has been a dead tomcat in the cobhouse for several days.
  - b. Grandma is making very strong cheese.
  - c. The privy has been pulled up and dumped into the cobhouse.
3. Why does Joey find it odd when Grandma tells them that they are going fishing one morning?
  - a. because he knows that she has never learned to fish
  - b. because she is dressed in fancy clothes
  - c. because she hasn't packed any fishing rods or reels
4. Where does Grandma lead Joey and Mary Alice on their long, hot morning walk?
  - a. to a boat hidden by the creek
  - b. to Aunt Puss's house
  - c. to a barbecue near the railroad tracks
5. What happens when a large snake drops into the boat?
  - a. It bites Joey.
  - b. Joey faints.
  - c. Joey hits it with an oar.
6. What does Grandma pull up from the bottom of the creek?
  - a. a box full of gold coins
  - b. a trap full of catfish
  - c. a crate full of bottles of beer
7. Why does Grandma look scandalized as she and the children row past the Rod & Gun Club?
  - a. She is embarrassed by the sight of men in their underwear.
  - b. She is shocked to see the sheriff drinking whiskey.
  - c. She wants the sheriff to think she is upset so that he won't try to stop her.
8. Why doesn't Joey want to go into Aunt Puss Chapman's house?
  - a. He thinks it looks haunted.
  - b. He wants to keep rowing the boat on the creek.
  - c. He wants to fish with the men at the Rod & Gun Club.
9. What do the children learn about Grandma's relationship to Aunt Puss Chapman?
  - a. Aunt Puss is Grandma's aunt.
  - b. Aunt Puss used to cook for Grandma's family.
  - c. Grandma used to work for Aunt Puss.
10. After leaving Aunt Puss's house, what does Grandma do with the rest of the catfish?
  - a. She gives it to the sheriff and the other men from the Rod & Gun Club.
  - b. She and the children have a feast back at home.
  - c. She feeds it to the drifters near the railroad tracks.



## III. A ONE-WOMAN CRIME WAVE (1931)

## DURING READING

*Check Your Understanding**Short Answer*

Write a short answer for each question.

1. What do Joey and Mary Alice see on the station platform when they get off the train in Grandma's town in 1931?
2. How does Mary Alice finally get the better of the tomcat that lives near the privy?
3. Instead of hearing the wind in the corn, what does Joey hear when he lies in bed at night that summer?
4. Why does Grandma pull a wash dress on over her overalls on the morning of their fishing trip?
5. What is in the hamper that Joey has to carry on the long walk?
6. What happens that day that bothers Joey "off and on for years"?
7. When Joey asks Grandma how much the fine is for breaking the state law and trapping fish, what is her answer?
8. What do Joey and Mary Alice decide silently together in the boat after Grandma hauls in the catfish?
9. How does Grandma respond when Mary Alice says that the men at the Rod & Gun Club aren't acting right?
10. When the sheriff says that he doesn't want anyone to feed the drifters, and that he wants them out of town, what does Grandma say?

## III. A ONE-WOMAN CRIME WAVE (1931)

## AFTER READING

*Deepen Your Understanding*

“Mary Alice said there was nothing to do and nobody to do it with . . .”

When Joey and Mary Alice Dowdel first arrive at Grandma’s, they are in completely unknown territory. These two children from the city don’t know what to make of Grandma, who seems very big, nor do they know what to make of the town, which seems very small. They have trouble getting to sleep at first, because the sounds—and even the silences—are so different from their world back in Chicago. The characters they meet—like Effie Wilcox or even the old tomcat—seem strange, and so do the customs—like using the privy or making soap in a big pot outside.

Write about a time when you made your first trip to a particular place. How did it feel? What sights, sounds, and smells were different? Describe how you felt about being in new surroundings. Be sure to include many sensory details (sight, sound, smell, taste, touch) to help your reader understand your experience.

IV. THE DAY OF JUDGMENT (1932)–  
THE PHANTOM BRAKEMAN (1933)

## BEFORE READING

*Focus Your Reading**Vocabulary Words to Know*

Study the following words and definitions. You will meet these words in your reading. Be sure to jot down in your word journal any other unknown words from the reading.

**reconciled**—settled; made peace with

**recommenced**—began again

**forecloses**—takes away property when the  
borrower cannot make payments on it

**benediction**—a blessing

**galleon**—a sturdy sailing ship from long ago

**cameo**—a stone or gem carved in relief,  
usually with a head in profile

**maneuvers**—military exercises or  
movements

**proprietor**—an owner

**confounded**—confused

**hunkered**—crouched; squatted

*Things to Know*

Here is some background information about this section of the book.

**The Great War** was what World War I (1939–1945) was called until World War II occurred.

**Bement** is a small town in central Illinois, about halfway between Decatur and Urbana-Champaign.

**Burgoo** is a kind of thick soup or stew.

**Huskers** and **combines** are important farm machinery. A husker strips the husks off ears of corn; a combine threshes and cleans grain.

**Temperance** is the practice of abstaining from the use of alcoholic drinks.

**Barnstormers** were pilots who flew their small planes in rural areas, performing stunts in the air and thrilling the crowds.

**FDR**, or Franklin Delano Roosevelt, was the thirty-second president of the United States. He was in office from 1933 until his death in 1945.

According to legend, **Mrs. O’Leary’s cow** was responsible for starting the Great Chicago Fire. It is fact that the fire, which began on October 8, 1871, did begin in or near the O’Learys’ wooden barn. The fire burned for several days and destroyed 18,000 buildings, depriving 100,000 people of their homes.

**IV. THE DAY OF JUDGMENT (1932)–  
THE PHANTOM BRAKEMAN (1933)****BEFORE READING***Focus Your Reading**Questions to Think About*

The following questions will help you understand the meaning of what you read. You do not have to write out the answers to these questions. Instead, look at them before you begin reading, and think about them while you are reading.

1. How are Joey's and Mary Alice's attitudes toward their annual visit to Grandma changing?
2. What further signs of the Great Depression can be seen in the summer of 1932?
3. How does Grandma continue to stray from conventional "feminine" behavior?
4. In how many ways does the author show that Mary Alice is growing to resemble Grandma more as time passes?
5. Even though Grandma is a very private person, why does she sometimes let people invade that privacy?

IV. THE DAY OF JUDGMENT (1932)–  
THE PHANTOM BRAKEMAN (1933)

DURING READING

*Build Your Vocabulary*

Read the sentences below. On the line, write your definition of the word in bold type. Then, on another sheet of paper, use that word in a new sentence of your own.

1. “It **reconciled** us some to our trips to visit her.”  
reconciled: \_\_\_\_\_
2. “. . . my bread-and-butter pickles have taken the blue ribbon every year since the fair **recommenced** after the Great War.”  
recommenced: \_\_\_\_\_
3. ““The bank **forecloses** on people’s farms and throws them off their land, and they don’t even appreciate it.””  
forecloses: \_\_\_\_\_
4. “She waved a hand in **benediction** over us.”  
benediction: \_\_\_\_\_
5. “Then Grandma sailed like a **galleon** into the front room, striking us dumb.”  
galleon: \_\_\_\_\_
6. “The collar was fine net, fixed with a big **cameo** brooch that rode high.”  
cameo: \_\_\_\_\_
7. ““Any minute now Mr. Buchanan is going to show us his stuff by putting his machine through the same **maneuvers** he used in the Great War against the wily Hun.””  
maneuvers: \_\_\_\_\_
8. “As **proprietor**, Mrs. Cripe wore a crocheted handkerchief pinned to her apron, and a hair net.”  
proprietor: \_\_\_\_\_
9. ““You done paid her before she worked out her day?” Miz Eubanks was **confounded**.”  
confounded: \_\_\_\_\_
10. “My job was to pry it out of the pot. Grandma **hunkered** in the grass with a butcher knife to carve it into cakes.”  
hunkered: \_\_\_\_\_

**IV. THE DAY OF JUDGMENT (1932)–  
THE PHANTOM BRAKEMAN (1933)****DURING READING**

## *Check Your Understanding*

### *Multiple Choice*

Circle the letter of the best answer to each question.

1. Why does Mrs. L. J. Weidenbach's husband tell her not to enter her pickles in the county fair in the summer of 1932?
  - a. Her bread-and-butter pickles are not good enough.
  - b. People will resent his wife's pickles because he is a banker.
  - c. Someone else needs to win the prize.
2. Why does Mrs. Weidenbach beg Grandma to enter a gooseberry pie at the fair?
  - a. She wants someone from their own town to win the blue ribbon.
  - b. She is flattering Grandma.
  - c. She is hoping that Grandma will become more involved in town affairs.
3. For how many days do Grandma and the children practice baking gooseberry pies?
  - a. two
  - b. three
  - c. four
4. Why does Joey think Grandma might let him take her airplane flight if she wins?
  - a. because she has been afraid of planes
  - b. because she seems too large and too old to climb into the plane
  - c. because she will be too busy with the baking contest
5. What does Grandma say when she sees Rupert Pennypacker's pie?
  - a. that she's "a goner"
  - b. that she's a better home baker
  - c. that gooseberry pies are "tricky things"
6. How does Grandma get the free airplane ride?
  - a. She gives the pilot a large piece of gooseberry pie in exchange for a ride.
  - b. The pilot feels sorry for her because she came in second.
  - c. She shows him a "first place" blue ribbon that she pulled off her hat.
7. In the summer of 1933, what reminds Joey and Mary Alice of home and Chicago?
  - a. Shirley Temple
  - b. Nehi soda
  - c. making soap
8. Why does Miz Eubanks come into the cafe?
  - a. She is coming for breakfast.
  - b. She is applying for a job as a fry cook.
  - c. She wants to take her daughter's money.
9. When Joey hears a snuffling noise in the middle of the night, what does Mary Alice tell him it is?
  - a. She's been blowing her nose.
  - b. She's been crying over a sad book.
  - c. She's hiding a puppy.
10. How do Vandalia and Junior get onto the train without anyone spotting them?
  - a. Joey gets the train to stop near Grandma's house.
  - b. Grandma sneaks them onto the train.
  - c. The conductor lets them board early.

## Check Your Understanding

### Short Answer

Write a short answer for each question.

1. What does Grandma say when Mrs. Weidenbach suggests that the children might like a day at the fair?
2. What does Grandma remind Joey of as she is trying to bake the perfect pie?
3. How does Grandma dress for the fair?
4. Why is Grandma really the winner of the blue ribbon, even though Rupert Pennypacker receives it?
5. Although Grandma knows she's too heavy for the plane, why does she climb in for a ride?
6. In the summer of 1933, what two things are different about the narrator, now that he is "thirteen at last"?
7. Why is Mary Alice taking tap-dancing lessons?
8. How has the Great Depression affected The Coffee Pot Cafe?
9. What story does Grandma tell Joey while they are making soap?
10. How does Grandma prevent Miz Eubanks from coming through the door to get Vandalia back?

**IV. THE DAY OF JUDGMENT (1932)–  
THE PHANTOM BRAKEMAN (1933)****AFTER READING**

## *Deepen Your Understanding*

*A Long Way from Chicago* was written mainly to entertain. This novel contains characters—especially Grandma—who are larger than life. There are many cases of exaggeration in the book, as in Joey’s description of Grandma’s kitchen: “The heat of the kitchen staggered her, but then people from Death Valley would have keeled over in Grandma’s kitchen.” Another example is Joey’s description of Vandalia Eubanks: “You had to look twice to see her. She was that skinny, and pale as a ghost. A light breeze would have blown her into the back room.” This type of exaggeration is called *hyperbole*. Storytellers use it for dramatic, and often comic, effect.

Write a one- to two-page story in which you use hyperbole to describe people and events. Make your story comic, dramatic, or both.



## V. THINGS WITH WINGS (1934)

## BEFORE READING

*Focus Your Reading**Vocabulary Words to Know*

Study the following words and definitions. You will meet these words in your reading. Be sure to jot down in your word journal any other unknown words from the reading.

**valise**—a piece of luggage

**riddled**—full of holes

**cadaver**—a corpse; a dead body

**implement**—a tool

**projectionist**—a person who operates a  
film projector at the movies

**merchandise**—goods for sale

**vicinity**—the surrounding area

**cockeyed**—crazy; twisted

**reallocate**—to distribute in a different way

**falsified**—to be made untrue

*Things to Know*

Here is some background information about this section of the book.

**John Dillinger** was an infamous gangster who terrorized the Midwest in the early 1930s. Dillinger formed a ruthless gang that robbed banks and made three jail breaks. They killed ten men and wounded seven others between 1933 and 1934. He was shot and killed by FBI agents outside a movie theater on July 22, 1934.

**Deere and Company** was founded in 1837 by a blacksmith named John Deere. One of the oldest manufacturing companies in the United States, it still produces very well-respected farm equipment and other products.

**Bank foreclosures** were common during the Great Depression. Just as today, most people in the 1930s bought their homes using mortgages (long-term bank loans, usually involving monthly payments to the bank). When homeowners failed to make their regular payments, the bank forced them to move out and seized the properties.

**Silent films** were made throughout the 1920s. When new technology enabled sound to be recorded along with images, and “talkies” (movies with soundtracks) were introduced, silent films soon disappeared. The first movie with sound was *The Jazz Singer*, which was produced in 1927. It amazed and thrilled audiences and revolutionized the film industry.

**Buffalo robes** were the hides of American buffalo that were lined on the inside with fabric. People used them as blankets, cover-ups, and rugs.

## *Focus Your Reading*

### *Questions to Think About*

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The following questions will help you understand the meaning of what you read. You do not have to write out the answers to these questions. Instead, look at them before you begin reading, and think about them while you are reading.

1. What technological innovations are mentioned in this book? How are these changes affecting life in the Midwest in the 1930s?
2. What examples in the story show that Joey and Mary Alice are around the age of adolescence?
3. What new insights are the children gaining into Grandma's relationship with Mrs. Wilcox?
4. In what ways do you know that Joey is beginning to appreciate Grandma's humor more as the years pass?
5. What are the different "things with wings" that the author refers to in this section of the book, either directly or indirectly?

## V. THINGS WITH WINGS (1934)

## DURING READING

*Build Your Vocabulary*

Read the sentences below. On the line, write your definition of the word in bold type. Then, on another sheet of paper, use that word in a new sentence of your own.

1. "With a powerful arm, Grandma swung Mrs. Wilcox's bulging **valise** aboard, then a picnic hamper."  
valise: \_\_\_\_\_
2. "Mary Alice and I had sulked because neither Mother nor Dad would take us to view the **riddled** corpse."  
riddled: \_\_\_\_\_
3. "When we got back to school in September, everybody would say they'd seen the **cadaver**."  
cadaver: \_\_\_\_\_
4. "The biggest was a drawing of the giant farm **implement** shed that Deere and Company was proposing to put up on the block where the old brickyard had been."  
implement: \_\_\_\_\_
5. "Then the **projectionist** got the film threaded, and the show started."  
projectionist: \_\_\_\_\_
6. "Mary Alice went for a look at the **merchandise**. But the tables were surrounded by flying elbows, so I settled next to Grandma."  
merchandise: \_\_\_\_\_
7. "A car from out of town backfired in the **vicinity** of the bank, and everybody on the sidewalk dropped down and grabbed gravel."  
vicinity: \_\_\_\_\_
8. "And who's been circulating such **cockeyed** rumors?"  
cockeyed: \_\_\_\_\_
9. "I suppose we could go back to the drawing board and **reallocate** our square footage."  
reallocate: \_\_\_\_\_
10. "But you'll have to confess you **falsified** those so-called Lincoln items. Fair's fair."  
falsified: \_\_\_\_\_

## V. THINGS WITH WINGS (1934)

## DURING READING

*Check Your Understanding**Multiple Choice*

Circle the letter of the best answer to each question.

1. Why is Mrs. Wilcox moving to Palmyra?
  - a. She wants to live near her children.
  - b. The bank is taking over her house.
  - c. Grandma is driving her crazy.
2. What does Grandma say she would have done after John Dillinger was killed?
  - a. gone to the funeral if she lived near Chicago
  - b. offered to have the funeral at her house
  - c. taken the children to see his dead body
3. How long has it been since someone has bought a car from Veech's garage?
  - a. two years
  - b. three years
  - c. four years
4. Why does Joey need two dollars in the summer of 1934?
  - a. He wants to buy a radio.
  - b. He wants to take driving lessons.
  - c. He needs to buy books for high school.
5. Where do Grandma and the children go to see the movie?
  - a. the park
  - b. the Holy Rollers church
  - c. the Lions Club building
6. What does Joey wonder when Grandma edges around the oak tree after the movie?
  - a. if she has gone crazy
  - b. if she is trying to spook them
  - c. if she is afraid to be out at night
7. Why does Grandma send the children up to the attic?
  - a. She wants them to trap the bat.
  - b. She wants them to bring down a fan.
  - c. She wants them to look for items for the church rummage sale.
8. Why does Grandma want people to think that the Lincolns owned the items she donates to the rummage sale?
  - a. People will think that Effie Wilcox's old house belonged to the Lincolns.
  - b. She wants to make as much money as possible.
  - c. She doesn't think that people in town appreciate American history.
9. Why is the banker afraid that the state will consider Effie's old house a historic site?
  - a. It will bring tourists to town who will create traffic jams.
  - b. Deere and Company won't be able to build their implement shed on the property.
  - c. It will make Effie famous.
10. What does Grandma get the banker to do in exchange for letting people know that her rummage sale items are not the Lincolns'?
  - a. He agrees to lend her money for a car.
  - b. He promises to pay for Joey's college.
  - c. He agrees to give Effie Wilcox her house back, with no payments due.

## Check Your Understanding

### Short Answer

---

Write a short answer for each question.

1. Why does Grandma usually not meet Joey and Mary Alice at the train station when they arrive for their summer visit?
2. Why does Joey seem to think it a bit odd that John Dillinger was called “a Robin Hood”?
3. What does Mary Alice answer when Joey says that Grandma will like it better without Effie Wilcox around?
4. How does Joey describe his first viewing of the Terraplane 8?
5. How much does it cost to go to the movies in Grandma’s town that summer?
6. What does Grandma say when Mary Alice asks whether there really are such things as vampires?
7. What two items in the attic do Mary Alice and Joey find most surprising?
8. Where does Grandma tell Mrs. L. J. Weidenbach she has gotten the stovepipe hat?
9. When Otis comes to Grandma’s door and says that Mr. Weidenbach would like to see her, why does she pretend to be alarmed?
10. What does Grandma say when Ray turns on the car radio during Joey’s driving lesson?

## V. THINGS WITH WINGS (1934)

## AFTER READING

*Deepen Your Understanding*

*“Grandma, there aren’t such things as vampires, are there?” Mary Alice asked. Did she want to know, or was she testing Grandma? Every summer Mary Alice seemed to pick up another of Grandma’s traits.”*

Is there a family member in *your* life—a grandparent, an aunt, an uncle, a cousin, or another relative—who has influenced you in some way? What kind of influence has this person had on you? What have you learned from him or her? What will you always remember about this person, no matter how much time passes?

Write a descriptive essay about this relative. Describe how your life has changed because of the relationship you two share. Be sure to include a description of this person’s special qualities, and discuss whether you think any of these qualities have been passed on to you.

**VI. CENTENNIAL SUMMER (1935)–  
THE TROOP TRAIN (1942)****BEFORE READING***Focus Your Reading**Vocabulary Words to Know*

Study the following words and definitions. You will meet these words in your reading. Be sure to jot down in your word journal any other unknown words from the reading.

**worldliness**—sophistication

**swagged**—decorated with material hanging  
in a curve between two points

**recoiled**—sprang back suddenly

**medley**—a series of songs

**thronged**—very crowded

**procession**—a ceremonial movement or  
parade

**stature**—height; prestige

**trundling**—rolling

**brandishing**—waving in a threatening way

**restraining**—controlling; holding back

*Things to Know*

Here is some background information about this section of the book.

A **centennial** is the celebration of the one hundredth “birthday” of a town or historic site. Since most towns in the Midwest were settled in the 1800s (long after most towns in the East), it would be logical that Grandma’s town had its centennial in 1935.

**The Order of the Eastern Star** is the women’s branch of the secret society known as the Masons. These groups are dedicated in part to doing charitable work.

**Camp Leonard Wood** was an army boot camp in Missouri. **Fort Sheridan**, run by the Army Air Corps, is located twenty miles north of Chicago on Lake Michigan.

The **U.S.-Mexican War** was fought between 1846 and 1848, as the United States tried to take new territory for westward expansion. Mexico, which had recently won independence from Spain and was in a weak state, was forced to give up huge amounts of territory, including land that now makes up the states of California, Nevada, New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah, and parts of Wyoming, Colorado, Kansas, and Oklahoma. (Mexico had already lost Texas in the 1830s.)

**VI. CENTENNIAL SUMMER (1935)–  
THE TROOP TRAIN (1942)****BEFORE READING***Focus Your Reading**Questions to Think About*

The following questions will help you understand the meaning of what you read. You do not have to write out the answers to these questions. Instead, look at them before you begin reading, and think about them while you are reading.

1. How does Grandma tend to handle her emotions? Are there any signs that this changes as the years pass?
2. In how many ways does the children's trip to Grandma in the summer of 1935 mark the end of an era?
3. Once she forms a plan, does Grandma always get her way? Why or why not?
4. In a world where money often seems to equal power, what does Grandma stand for? Are there ways in which she resembles Robin Hood, to whom the narrator refers more than once in the book?
5. What do Joey and Mary Alice learn from Grandma over the years? What does Grandma learn from them?



**VI. CENTENNIAL SUMMER (1935)–  
THE TROOP TRAIN (1942)****DURING READING*****Build Your Vocabulary***

Read the sentences below. On the line, write your definition of the word in bold type. Then, on another sheet of paper, use that word in a new sentence of your own.

1. “We both assumed an air of weary **worldliness** as we climbed down off the Wabash Blue Bird one last time.”  
worldliness: \_\_\_\_\_
2. “The depot was **swagged** in red, white, and blue bunting.”  
swagged: \_\_\_\_\_
3. “Remembering cottonmouths, I **recoiled**.”  
recoiled: \_\_\_\_\_
4. “They did a **medley** that included ‘Just a Song at Twilight’ and after a round of applause, came back for ‘Sweet Adeline.’”  
medley: \_\_\_\_\_
5. “While the dew was still on the roses, the road outside Grandma’s house was **thronged** with people coming in from as far away now as Argenta and Farmer City for the parade.”  
thronged: \_\_\_\_\_
6. “Next in the order of **procession** were five tractor-drawn hayframes jammed with members of the Piatt County Democratic Party.”  
procession: \_\_\_\_\_
7. “On a pile of pillows to give him **stature** sat Uncle Grady Griswold in full uniform.”  
stature: \_\_\_\_\_
8. “But by the time we were **trundling** past The Coffee Pot Cafe and Uncle Grady was **brandishing** his sword, the applause began.”  
trundling: \_\_\_\_\_  
brandishing: \_\_\_\_\_
9. “He spoke sharply to his daughter, who laid a **restraining** hand on him.”  
restraining: \_\_\_\_\_

**VI. CENTENNIAL SUMMER (1935)–  
THE TROOP TRAIN (1942)****DURING READING**

## *Check Your Understanding*

### *Multiple Choice*

Circle the letter of the best answer to each question.

1. Why does Joey think he may not return to Grandma's after the summer of 1935?
  - a. He will try to get a job in Chicago.
  - b. He will be studying for college.
  - c. He has joined the army.
2. What does the new billboard at the depot say?
  - a. "Gentlemen: grow a beard or pay a fine!"
  - b. "Young men: grab your dance partners!"
  - c. "Gentlemen: put on your finest coats and ties!"
3. What does Mary Alice say is wrong with the old white dress?
  - a. There is a bustle in the back.
  - b. The seed pearls have fallen off; it looks shabby.
  - c. There is a large rip in the back.
4. What does Grandma do when she sees the children in the clothes from the attic?
  - a. She says they'll win first prize.
  - b. She wipes away tears.
  - c. She warns them not to soil the clothes.
5. Why does Mrs. L J. Weidenbach come to Grandma's after the children arrive?
  - a. She wants to persuade the children to make friends with her nephew.
  - b. She invites them all to dinner.
  - c. She needs Grandma's help preparing for the Centennial Celebration.
6. What does Joey find in the cobhouse?
  - a. a snake
  - b. a kitten
  - c. a puppy
7. Why does Grandma take Joey to Uncle Grady Griswold's house?
  - a. She is worried about them.
  - b. She wants Joey to do some chores.
  - c. She wants Uncle Grady to be in the Centennial parade.
8. Who is the tall, dark, handsome man dancing with Mary Alice at the talent show?
  - a. Mr. L. J. Weidenbach
  - b. Mrs. Wilcox's nephew
  - c. Ray Veech
9. Why does Mrs. Weidenbach's father attack Uncle Grady?
  - a. He believes Uncle Grady is an enemy soldier.
  - b. He doesn't think Uncle Grady was in the Mexican War or is the oldest settler.
  - c. He thinks Uncle Grady bumped into the Weidenbachs' float on purpose.
10. Why does Joey send Grandma a telegram in 1942?
  - a. to tell her that Mary Alice is married
  - b. to say that he will be passing through Grandma's town on an army train
  - c. to wish her a happy birthday

## Check Your Understanding

### Short Answer

---

Write a short answer for each question.

1. Why do Joey and Mary Alice sigh when they see the new sign at the depot?
2. When Grandma says that they will be going back to “the old days and the old ways” for a week, how does Joey answer?
3. Why does Grandma tell the children to bring the cut-velvet curtains down from the attic?
4. When they try on the old-fashioned clothes, what does Joey notice about Mary Alice for the first time?
5. Why does Mrs. Weidenbach say that she must be “on hand” at the talent show?
6. When Joey asks Grandma if she has a new pet, what does she say?
7. Why does Joey think that Uncle Grady’s uniform looks funny?
8. How is the stage in the park lit for the talent show?
9. What does Joey have to do before he can go to army flight school?
10. How does Grandma signal to Joey as his train passes through town in the middle of the night?

**VI. CENTENNIAL SUMMER (1935)–  
THE TROOP TRAIN (1942)****AFTER READING**

## *Deepen Your Understanding*

In the first chapter of *A Long Way from Chicago*, Joey and Mary Alice hear about a big-city reporter who has been asking about Shotgun Cheatham at The Coffee Pot Cafe. Grandma, who is extremely private, doesn't like the sound of this. As Joey says, "When she heard the town was apt to fill up with newspaper reporters, her jaw clenched."

In the second chapter, someone blows up Grandma's mailbox one night. As she surveys the wreckage, according to Joey, "Grandma planted her big fists on her big hips, and her jaw clenched in a familiar way." Readers are beginning to associate this mannerism with Grandma; it is one of her "trademarks." The narrator refers to it again, later in the book, and eventually Mary Alice seems to picking Grandma's habit up herself.

This literary technique is called *repetition*. Authors repeat key words or phrases in their writing to reinforce certain qualities in the people and places they have created.

Choose one of the examples of repetition below, or find one yourself in the book. In addition to Grandma's clenched jaw, some examples of repetition in *A Long Way from Chicago* include

- Joey and Mary Alice catching Grandma in a "whopper"
- the children having "nightmares" for years
- the snowball bushes outside Grandma's house
- Grandma fingering her "chins"
- references to Grandma using "masculine" language
- Effie Wilcox's wandering eyes
- Grandma's hot kitchen

How often is the example of repetition you chose mentioned? Why do you think the author chose to repeat this particular item? What does it add to the story? Answer these questions in a short essay. You may need to use another sheet of paper.

## End-of-Book Test

Circle the letter of the best answer to each question.

1. How old is Joe Dowdel when he tells the story of his visits to Grandma with his sister, Mary Alice?
  - a. just about the same age as Grandma was at the time of the story
  - b. younger than Grandma was at the time of the story
  - c. older than Grandma was at the time of the story
2. What kind of town does Joey say Grandma lives in?
  - a. the kind that people love to buy postcards of
  - b. the kind that the railroad tracks cut in two
  - c. the kind that has too many restaurants and not enough ball fields
3. Where in town do Joey and Mary Alice get most of their news?
  - a. the saloon
  - b. Moore's Store
  - c. The Coffee Pot Cafe
4. What does Grandma say about Effie Wilcox?
  - a. that Effie is pretty as a picture
  - b. that Effie's tongue flaps at both ends
  - c. that Effie is a living saint
5. Where has Grandma gotten her rifle?
  - a. It used to be Grandpa Dowdel's.
  - b. Her father gave it to her as a wedding present.
  - c. She bought it at a rummage sale.
6. How do the Cowgill boys break into Grandma's house?
  - a. They come through an open basement window.
  - b. They break a kitchen window and climb through.
  - c. They use a file to slice through the screen door.
7. What is the name of the train station in Chicago where Joey and Mary Alice leave for Grandma's?
  - a. Dearborn Station
  - b. Wabash Station
  - c. Union Station
8. On the day when Grandma and the children go fishing on the creek, what do they see the men at the Rod & Gun Club doing?
  - a. drinking and singing
  - b. shooting their rifles and drinking
  - c. singing and eating catfish
9. How often does Grandma go to visit Aunt Puss Chapman?
  - a. about once a week
  - b. about twice a week
  - c. every couple of weeks
10. When the sheriff tells Grandma that there is probably a law against feeding the drifters without a license, what does Grandma say?
  - a. She tells him that she does have a license, but she left it at home.
  - b. She says that all of the "evidence" has been eaten up.
  - c. She says, "Well, arrest me, then."

(continued)

## *End-of-Book Test (continued)*

11. When Mrs. Weidenbach tries to persuade Grandma to enter the baking contest at the county fair, what does Grandma say?
  - a. She says, "I shouldn't hide my light under a bushel."
  - b. She says, "I cook to eat, not to show off."
  - c. She says, "A day at the fair would be good for the kids."
12. What does Grandma say about Rupert Pennypacker when she sees him at the fair?
  - a. He is the richest man in the county.
  - b. He once broke her heart.
  - c. He is the best home baker in Illinois.
13. How does Miz Eubanks know that Vandalia is hiding in Grandma's house?
  - a. She has been following Vandalia all day.
  - b. Junior Stubbs has told Miz Eubanks about it because he wants to marry Vandalia.
  - c. People in town have told Miz Eubanks that Vandalia was spotted going in.
14. What happens when Grandma sees Miz Eubanks on a ladder trying to get into the house?
  - a. She tells Joey to get the sheriff; someone is breaking and entering.
  - b. She jerks the ladder away from the house and makes Miz Eubanks fall.
  - c. She tells Mary Alice to push the ladder away from the window.
15. What movie do Grandma and the children see in the park?
  - a. a Dracula film
  - b. a Shirley Temple film
  - c. a Charlie Chaplin film
16. When a car backfires near the bank in town, what do people think it is?
  - a. one of the Cowgills' cherry bombs
  - b. gunfire from gangsters
  - c. a train crash
17. How is Mr. Weidenbach able to make his deal with Deere and Company and still let Effie Wilcox get her house back?
  - a. He promises to move Effie's house farther down the road.
  - b. He agrees to use just the brickyard space for the Deere and Company shed and leave Effie's house alone.
  - c. He decides that the Deere and Company shed will be built outside of town near Grandma's house.
18. What is the name of the train that Joey and Mary Alice take to Grandma's for the last time in 1935?
  - a. the Cannonball
  - b. the Comet
  - c. the Blue Bird
19. While Joey and Grandma visit Uncle Grady and Aunt Mae, what is Mary Alice doing?
  - a. making costumes
  - b. going to a Shirley Temple film
  - c. going to a Charlie Chaplin film
20. What old dream may come true for Joey when World War II begins?
  - a. becoming a reporter
  - b. flying planes
  - c. leading troops into battle

# Answer Key

## I. PROLOGUE—SHOTGUN CHEATHAM'S LAST NIGHT ABOVE GROUND (1929)

### *Build Your Vocabulary*

Wording and definitions may vary. Students may remember the definitions given in the Vocabulary Words to Know section of Focus Your Reading, or they may refine the definitions based on the context and the reading overall. Students' new sentences will vary.

### *Check Your Understanding: Multiple Choice*

- |      |      |       |
|------|------|-------|
| 1. c | 5. b | 9. c  |
| 2. b | 6. a | 10. b |
| 3. b | 7. b |       |
| 4. a | 8. c |       |

### *Check Your Understanding: Short Answer*

- Joey and Mary Alice are growing older each year, so every August they bring a more mature perspective to Grandma's. Although she is not changing much, they are; therefore, they see and appreciate different things as they age.
- Grandma is not a stereotypically "feminine" woman who follows conventions. She speaks her mind and has no tolerance for pretentious or nosy people.
- He finds it odd because Chicago at that time was the home of many infamous gangsters who were responsible for many violent deaths.
- Joey's family doesn't have a car, and Grandma doesn't have a telephone.
- They take the train; they travel on the Wabash Railroad's Blue Bird from Chicago en route to St. Louis.
- He says that it is just one short block of brick buildings: the bank, the insurance agency, Moore's store, and The Coffee Pot Cafe.
- They don't want to write about anyone named Shotgun, but nobody knows any other name for him.
- She thinks he wants to make fun of them all for being simple country people.
- She says that he lived in a chicken coop.
- He dives headfirst out of a window.

### *Deepen Your Understanding*

Students' paragraphs will vary.

## II. THE MOUSE IN THE MILK (1930)

### *Build Your Vocabulary*

Wording and definitions may vary. Students may remember the definitions given in the Vocabulary Words to Know section of Focus Your Reading, or they may refine the definitions based on the context and the reading overall. Students' new sentences will vary.

### *Check Your Understanding: Multiple Choice*

- |      |      |       |
|------|------|-------|
| 1. a | 5. c | 9. b  |
| 2. b | 6. a | 10. a |
| 3. c | 7. a |       |
| 4. c | 8. b |       |

### *Check Your Understanding: Short Answer*

- The puzzle shows Colonel Charles Lindbergh and his plane, *The Spirit of St. Louis*, which he flew across the Atlantic in May 1927.
- Her room is downstairs because she doesn't like climbing the stairs.
- He says you had to be there on time, but the breakfasts were worth it, with enormous amounts of food.
- Grandma says that the children are eating; she also says that since they are from Chicago, so they've heard everything.
- She finds it interesting because it is still three months until Halloween, which tends to be a more common time for pranks like this one.
- He doesn't believe her; he says, "Naw, you never."
- She says that they are from Chicago and that Joey is in a gang.
- She thinks that Ernie is stupid; he is sixteen but still in fourth grade. She thinks that Ernie is weaker than his older brothers.
- She says that it was another thing about Grandma's that gave her nightmares for years.
- She tells Ernie that she won't need milk the next day because she's going to visit her cousin; she keeps the children inside the house all evening without the lights on, making no noise.

### *Deepen Your Understanding*

Students' essays will vary.



### III. A ONE-WOMAN CRIME WAVE

#### *Build Your Vocabulary*

Wording and definitions may vary. Students may remember the definitions given in the Vocabulary Words to Know section of Focus Your Reading, or they may refine the definitions based on the context and the reading overall. Students' new sentences will vary.

#### *Check Your Understanding: Multiple Choice*

- |      |      |       |
|------|------|-------|
| 1. c | 5. b | 9. c  |
| 2. b | 6. b | 10. c |
| 3. c | 7. c |       |
| 4. a | 8. a |       |

#### *Check Your Understanding: Short Answer*

1. They see a sign from the sheriff saying "Drifters Keep Moving."
2. She carries a broom when she goes outside and swats the cat if it bothers her.
3. He hears shuffling boots and an occasional voice.
4. It isn't socially acceptable for her to go outdoors in men's overalls, so she feels obliged to wear a dress on top of them.
5. The hamper contains canned fruit, canned tomatoes, pickled peaches, snap beans, turnips, cabbage, and a loaf of bread.
6. It bothers him that it was he, not Mary Alice, who fainted when the snake fell into the boat.
7. She says the fine is nothing if you don't get caught. She adds that the boat she is rowing is not hers, anyway.
8. They decide never to tell their father about his mother's illegal fishing.
9. She says that "men in a bunch never do" act right.
10. Grandma says that they are out of town; she is feeding them on the other side of the town line.

#### *Deepen Your Understanding*

Students' descriptions will vary.

### IV. THE DAY OF JUDGMENT (1932) — THE PHANTOM BRAKEMAN (1933)

#### *Build Your Vocabulary*

Wording and definitions may vary. Students may remember the definitions given in the Vocabulary Words to Know section of Focus Your Reading, or they

may refine the definitions based on the context and the reading overall. Students' new sentences will vary.

#### *Check Your Understanding: Multiple Choice*

- |      |      |       |
|------|------|-------|
| 1. b | 5. a | 9. c  |
| 2. a | 6. c | 10. a |
| 3. b | 7. b |       |
| 4. b | 8. c |       |

#### *Check Your Understanding: Short Answer*

1. She says that they are from Chicago and have "seen everything."
2. She reminds him of a scientist "seeking the cure for something."
3. Grandma dresses up. She wears a flowered, ready-made dress; a big cameo brooch; white shoes with bows; and a big hat.
4. She is really the winner because she has switched the cards in front of the pies. That makes the pie with Rupert's name really hers, and that pie wins the blue ribbon.
5. Grandma just wants to feel what it's like to be up in the cockpit ("hen roost").
6. He prefers to be called Joe now, not Joey; he also walks ahead of Mary Alice when they go into town.
7. She loves Shirley Temple and wants to dance like her. Also, her mother thinks it will give her poise.
8. Mrs. Cripe no longer has a fry cook or a lady helping at the counter. She only has one girl working for her now.
9. She tells him about the train crash and the brakeman's ghost.
10. Grandma says that if Miz Eubanks crosses the doorsill, she will wring Miz Eubank's neck.

#### *Deepen Your Understanding*

Students' stories will vary.

### V. THINGS WITH WINGS (1934)

#### *Build Your Vocabulary*

Wording and definitions may vary. Students may remember the definitions given in the Vocabulary Words to Know section of Focus Your Reading, or they may refine the definitions based on the context and the reading overall. Students' new sentences will vary.



**Check Your Understanding: Multiple Choice**

- |      |      |       |
|------|------|-------|
| 1. b | 5. a | 9. b  |
| 2. c | 6. b | 10. c |
| 3. a | 7. c |       |
| 4. b | 8. a |       |

**Check Your Understanding: Short Answer**

1. She assumes that they can find their own way to her house from the train.
2. He finds it odd because Dillinger did not give any of his money to the poor, as Robin Hood did.
3. She says that Joey doesn't know anything and that men don't have any idea about women.
4. He says it was love at first sight, as if he'd been waiting for her all his life.
5. It costs a nickel or a can of food for the hungry.
6. She says that the only bloodsuckers are the banks.
7. Two old valentines, probably given to Grandma by Grandpa, surprise them the most.
8. She says that the hat was in with some other old things that Effie Wilcox threw out of her house when she had to leave.
9. Grandma pretends to be afraid that the bank has failed.
10. She tells him to turn off the radio so that they can "listen to the country."

**Deepen Your Understanding**

Students' essays will vary.

**VI. CENTENNIAL SUMMER (1935) —  
THE TROOP TRAIN (1942)**
**Build Your Vocabulary**

Wording and definitions may vary. Students may remember the definitions given in the Vocabulary Words to Know section of Focus Your Reading, or they may refine the definitions based on the context and the reading overall. Students' new sentences will vary.

**Check Your Understanding: Multiple Choice**

- |      |      |       |
|------|------|-------|
| 1. a | 5. c | 9. b  |
| 2. a | 6. b | 10. b |
| 3. a | 7. c |       |
| 4. b | 8. c |       |

**Check Your Understanding: Short Answer**

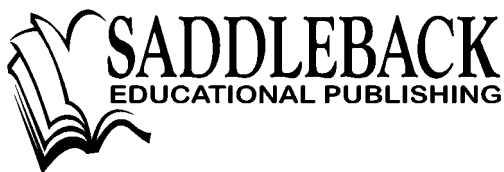
1. They don't like to see things change, because (as Joey says) they are "still kids."
2. He tells Grandma that she has never given up on the old ways.
3. She plans to make herself a costume out of them.
4. He realizes that she is attractive and that boys will be "hanging around her" soon.
5. Her nephew will be doing a dramatic reading, and she wants to be there for him.
6. She says that Chicago people have pets, but that she keeps a litter of cats in the cobhouse to kill vermin.
7. Joey doesn't recognize the uniform because it is apparently from the Mexican War; he has never seen a uniform that old before.
8. Car headlights are shining on the stage to light it up.
9. He has to go to basic training at Camp Leonard Wood.
10. Grandma has the lights on in every room, and she stands in the doorway waving.

**Deepen Your Understanding**

Essays will vary.

**END-OF-BOOK TEST**

- |      |       |       |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. c | 8. a  | 15. a |
| 2. b | 9. a  | 16. b |
| 3. c | 10. b | 17. b |
| 4. b | 11. b | 18. c |
| 5. a | 12. c | 19. c |
| 6. c | 13. c | 20. b |
| 7. a | 14. b |       |



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